

**Animal Celebration Dance**  
Barbara Gilmour's Second Grade Class  
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Barbara began this process by reading a section from *I'm In Charge of Celebrations* by Byrd Baylor about celebrating coyote day. Ms. Baylor describes the coyote with beautiful language and celebrates him by bringing him a feast. She then shared her medicine cards which have lovely illustrations and verbal descriptions of animals. Each child then chose his or her own animal to write about and to draw. In the computer lab, she and the students created books about the animals.

- I. Body part warm up: To find the essence of each animal, the dancers were asked to think of how their animal might move. To encourage them to abstract the movement, the dancers were asked to put a movement into a different body part.

Assign dancers body parts to move in the way that their animal moves. The question was, "Who can show us how his or her animal moves its head, arms, back, legs, feet, in place and through space."

From the dancers:

Head: buffalo circling his head to rub his horns

Arms: owl flying and opening and closing her wings

Back: armadillo curling and reaching her spine

Legs: dragonfly extending and bending his legs

Feet: grouse grabbing with feet

Entire body moving in place: fox jumping and surprising

Entire body moving through space: lynx stalking another animal

Dancer demonstrates the action, class learns it; teacher puts it into 4/4 time as he or she demonstrates and then the class dances the entire sequence in order. Talk about muscle memory. Music is Planet Drum by Mickey Hart.

- II. Explore the ways that a particular animal locomotes. It is difficult for students to abstract the movement that is the essence of the animal. You cannot be a buffalo, but you can gallop fiercely like one.

Explore several ideas from different students. Ask each student then to create a movement phrase that shows his animal. The rubric is:

The dance must travel, circle, go to the ground and into the air.

The dance must begin and end in a shape.

The phrase should be 16 counts.

- III. Combining the elements: Creating an animal celebration.

After each student created his or her movement and danced it for the rest of the class. We decided to create a unison animal celebration dance.

The unison dance is:

Four skips forward and four skips back

Four skips forward and four skips back

Seven slides to the right; freeze on count eight.

Seven slides to the left; freeze on count eight.

Each animal beginning with child portraying lynx make his or her own shape one at a time around the circle.

#### IV. The Dance:

Begin in the Jell-O wall. Each dancer dances out as his or her name is read and animal described.

All dancers do the body part warm-up in unison.

All dancers do the celebrations dance.

Music is *One World*, track one Johnny Clegg and Juluka, South Africa

**Grouse** / \_\_\_\_\_ The grouse gently flies and gracefully dances. She is happily chirping while she is laying her eggs. She quickly spins and flies.

**Skunk** / \_\_\_\_\_ The skunk lovingly protects her babies. She digs and scampers on her tiptoes.

**Owl** / \_\_\_\_\_ The owl flies, hunts, soars, eats, sleeps, gently flings, quickly flies, and slowly hunts.

**Horse** / \_\_\_\_\_ The horse darts, stampedes, gallops, slowly kicks, and quickly runs.

**Otter** / \_\_\_\_\_ The otter hides, runs, and sharply attacks. He playfully swims in the water.

**Squirrel** / \_\_\_\_\_ The squirrel runs, eats quickly, grabs, gathers, harvests, and hunts.

**Eagle** / \_\_\_\_\_ The eagle lightly flaps, gently soars, and catches her prey with her talons.

**Turtle** / \_\_\_\_\_ The turtle slowly swims, carefully digs, and quietly snaps.

**Armadillo** / \_\_\_\_\_ The armadillo slowly rolls and fights, shields and sleeps.

**Lynx** / \_\_\_\_\_ The lynx dances, gracefully leaps, wags and punches, and madly attacks.

**Badger** / \_\_\_\_\_ The badger madly fights, grabs, and hisses.

**Opossum** / \_\_\_\_\_ The opossum hangs, pounces, fights, climbs, attacks, and carefully rolls

**Antelope** / \_\_\_\_\_ The antelope walks proudly, delicately nibbles, awkwardly sits, and gracefully leaps away.

**Turkey** / \_\_\_\_\_ The turkey happily eats, slowly fattens, and is scared while it waits for Thanksgiving.

**Buffalo** / \_\_\_\_\_ The buffalo carefully runs, stampedes, and darts. He leaps and quietly leaps while his coat is gently shedding.

**Bear** / \_\_\_\_\_ The bear climbs, hunts, rolls, roughly growls, and sleepily hibernates.

**Elk** / \_\_\_\_\_ The elk lightly eats, quietly runs, and gracefully leaps.

**Butterfly** / \_\_\_\_\_ The butterfly happily flies, slowly eats, and beautifully transforms.

**Wolf** / \_\_\_\_\_ The wolf quietly protects, crazily attacks, swiftly runs, silently sneaks, fiercely bites, and soundly sleeps.

**Fox** / \_\_\_\_\_ The fox happily runs, pounces, hunts, grabs, and attacks.

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